

SUMMARY

(This page should give a brief explanation, either in paragraph form or by bullet points, of the substantive changes in the rule. If a new rule, it should briefly explain what the rule does. Legislative Research will use this information to prepare their paperwork for the legislators.

The National Conference on School Transportation meets every five years to update the National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures book. This book is published for states to use as a guideline when developing their own specifications.

This conference is attended by delegates from each of the 50 United States and representatives from all aspects of the school bus manufacturing industry.

The last National Conference was held in 2000. The current Specifications and Procedures book was published in 2002.

In 2002 Arkansas established a ten (10)-member School Transportation Specifications Committee comprised of school district superintendents, transportation supervisors, and members of the Arkansas Association of Pupil Transportation. Representatives of the school bus manufacturing industry also participated in discussions on implementing changes in the current Arkansas Specifications.

The new Specifications include authorization for Arkansas buses to use new technologies, which have produced safer and more advanced buses. These buses will be available for schools to purchase this fall. However, under the existing specifications, Arkansas schools will not be allowed to purchase these buses.

Examples of new technologies in school bus design include but are not limited to:

- 1) Body panels attached with bonding agents and screws rather than rivets.
- 2) The use of bonded glass for windows.
- 3) The use of LED lights rather than alternating strobe lights on the stop arm.
- 4) The requirement that all new buses be equipped with an audible back up alarm.

Given that Arkansas is currently operating under specifications developed in 1994, that new technologies have produced safer and more advanced buses, and that buses with these features will be available this fall, it is recommended that these Rules be approved by the State Board to be released for public comment.